

Air quality: new stricter limits for pollutant emissions



On 8 December 2016 the Council adopted a new directive to reduce air pollution. The new rules set stricter national limits for the emission of some of the most dangerous air pollutants.

The aim is to reduce the **health risks** and **environmental impact** of air pollution. With this directive, the **number of premature deaths** due to air pollution in the EU is estimated to be **cut by about 50%** in 2030 (compared to 2005).

The directive also aligns EU law with **international commitments** (following the revision of the Gothenburg Protocol in 2012).

"These new rules will save lives and improve the health of EU citizens. Their implementation will require a significant commitment from the member states, but we are ready for this challenge. The protection of the health and the environment are well worth the efforts which will be needed."

László Sólymos, Slovak Environment Minister and President of the Council

Pollutants

The rules cover emissions of five pollutants: sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, non-methane volatile organic compounds, ammonia and fine particulate matter.

National emission limits

The directive sets ceilings for each country of the maximum **emissions allowed per year**. The limits for each pollutant that will apply each year **from 2020 to 2029** are identical to those to which the member states are already committed in the revised Gothenburg protocol. New stricter reductions have been agreed **from 2030**.

Emission levels for 2025

Indicative emission levels for 2025 will be identified for each member state. They will be determined on the basis of a **linear trajectory** towards the emission limits that will apply from 2030. However, member states will have the possibility to follow a non-linear trajectory if this is more efficient.

If member states deviate from the trajectory planned, they will need to give the reasons and explain the actions they intend to take in order to get back on track.

Flexibility

Some flexibility to comply with the limits is foreseen, under certain circumstances. For instance, if one year a member state cannot fulfil its commitment due to an exceptionally cold winter or dry summer, this country will have the possibility to **average out annual emissions** with those of the preceding and subsequent year.

Timeline and next steps

The Commission presented its **proposal** as part of the '**Air quality package**' in December 2013. This file follows the ordinary legislative procedure. The Council and the European Parliament **reached a deal** on a compromise text in June 2016.

After the **vote** at the European Parliament at first reading in November 2016, the **adoption** by the Council and the signature by both institutions are the final steps of the process. The directive, which will soon be published in the Official Journal of the EU, should **enter into force on 31 December 2016**.

- [Directiva sobre la reducción de las emisiones nacionales de determinados contaminantes atmosféricos](#)
- [Calidad del aire: acuerdo sobre unos límites más restrictivos para las emisiones contaminantes](#)

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